



RCD Outlook 2004

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Fall River RCD: "Serving their Community"

Located within Shasta County, the Fall River RCD has been providing a variety of services to local stakeholders for many years. Working with local, state, and federal agencies, the RCD provides the necessary leadership to ensure that the community's natural resources are being restored, preserved, and protected for future generations. The RCD provides landowners with technical assistance, education, and other critical information. Currently, the RCD has three employees who are instrumental in delivering services to the community. Typically, the RCD is involved in three to five projects simultaneously. Tim Weaver, District Manager, has been instrumental in ensuring that projects are completed efficiently, professionally, and on time.

Throughout the year, the RCD conducts workshops, seminars, and other educational



Installing the Culvert on Bear Creek.

outreach activities to provide stakeholders with vital information that can be used to manage the land. Recently, the RCD held a workshop covering a variety of topics including: Erosion Watermilfoil, Impacts, & Management Options; Current Aquatic Weed Management in the Lower Fall River; and Aquatic Weed Impacts to Inland Fisheries. These workshops address issues important to the local community. Furthermore, they provide a forum for discussion and cultivates a collaborative environment, thereby ensuring that all stakeholders are involved in the decision making process.

The RCD has been a leader in the local Conservation Easement Program. Working with willing landowners, the RCD has assisted citizens in finding funds, completing required documents, and answering questions. Consequently, land is being protected for the enjoyment and benefit of future generations.

Recently, the RCD installed a culvert located on Bear Creek, identified as phase one of the Upper Big Bear Restoration project. The initial phase was to install a culvert and rebuild the rail grade that was destroyed by flooding in 1985 and 1997. The contractor designed the culvert to withstand flows generated by a 100-year flood. This phase is intended to protect both the Fall River and the trout fishery from sediment generated up stream. The 2nd phase

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Fall River RCD (cont.)

will focus on stream realignment, utilizing a pond and plug strategy, and allowing sediment deposition over a 300 acre meadow. The project required the RCD to assist in designing the structures, facilitating collaboration between diverse stakeholder groups, educating community members, and implementing an effective monitoring program.



Completed Culvert on Bear Creek.

Earlier this year, the RCD hired Chris Pirosko as the Watershed Coordinator. Already, he has immersed himself in the local community. Chris is working with the Fire Safe Council to address excess fuel loads and to minimize the dangers posed by fires. He is also working with the Technical Advisory Group (TAG), which is an organization consisting of local residents, agency representatives, and technical resource professionals. The TAG provides a forum for the community to identify problems, develop comprehensive collaborative solutions, and ensures that resources are used effectively. Chris is

also aggressively working with local groups to control and eradicate the various noxious weeds in the area.

Emphasizing the grass roots approach, the RCD has worked with their partners to improve the environment and protect the natural resources within their district. Consequently, the RCD has developed a reputation for achieving results while ***serving their community.***

Written by Robert Shun, Grant Coordinator

Watershed Coordinator Workshops Scheduled

The Department of Conservation, in partnership with the California Bay Delta Authority (CBDA) and the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts (CARCD), is sponsoring a series of workshops for watershed coordinators funded through the Department's Watershed Coordinator Grant Program. The workshop series is called Tools and Methods of Watershed Conservation. The series will consist of three workshops, each held twice to accommodate coordinators in the northern and southern regions of the state. The first set of workshops will be two-day training sessions with the remaining workshops each being one day. Topics to be covered include watershed stewardship, wildlife corridors at the landscape level, and group facilitation. Dennis Bowker, a CBDA consultant, will provide the training for the watershed stewardship and group facilitation workshops. Wendell Gilgert, State Biologist for NRCS, will provide the wildlife corridor training.

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Conflict of Interest (Part 1)

As public officials district directors and employees must be aware of the potential for a conflict of interest while conducting district activities. Under section 9303 of the Public Resources Code (Division 9), directors are ,”prohibited from being a salaried officer or employee”. Directors can not receive compensation for their services as a director, nor can they be a district employee while they are a director. The only exception is that directors are able to receive “reasonable and necessary expenses incurred in attendance at meetings...”. Such expenses include reasonable costs associated with traveling for district business. Directors can also be reimbursed for costs associated with events such as the CARCD Annual Conference.

Another conflict of interest that directors must avoid is selling equipment, materials, or services to the district. For example, if a director owned a public storage company, he or she should not charge the district for storage space.

To ensure that directors are aware of potential conflict of interest issues they should complete a Form 700 and keep it on file at the district office. Employees with decision making authority should also complete Form 700. Form 700 can be found on the Fair Political Practices Commission website at <http://www.fppc.ca.gov> The form 700 can help directors and designated employees identify potential sources of conflict of interests.

In addition to the conflict of interest guidelines provided in Division 9, directors are also subject to the requirements of the Political Reform Act. The Act prohibits public officials from making, participating in, or attempting to influence a decision if it’s possible that the official could benefit financially from the decision. In cases where directors have a conflict of interest, the director should recuse themselves from the decision making process. A director will have a conflict of interest if it is likely that the outcome of the decision will have an impact on their economic interests.

The Fair Political Practices Commission developed an eight step process to help public officials determine if they have a conflict of interest. Directors should always be aware of the potential for a conflict of interest. The eight step process can help directors decide if they should recuse themselves from a decision.

The eight step process involves answering the following questions

Step One: Are you a “public official” within the meaning of the rules?

Step Two: Are you making, participating in making or influencing a government decision?

Step Three: What are your economic interests? What are the possible sources of a financial conflict of interest.

Step Four: Are your economic interests directly or indirectly involved in the decision?

Step Five: What kinds of financial impacts on your economic interests are considered important enough to trigger a conflict of interest?

Step Six: Is the likelihood that there will be a significant impact on your economic interest more than a mere possibility.?

Step Seven: If you have a conflict of interest, does the “public generally” exception apply?

Step Eight: Even if you have a disqualifying conflict of interest, is your participation legally required?

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Conflict of Interest Cont.

The answer to the first step will always be yes for RCD directors. In the second step you must determine if you are making, participating in making or influencing a government decision. This will be the case when you make any RCD decision. For example, when you vote at an RCD meeting, decide how RCD funding should be spent, or hire an employee. The rules also apply when you are just participating in making a decision. You would be participating in a decision if you give other directors advice or make recommendations to an RCD decision maker. The rules also apply if you influence a decision. This could occur simply by talking to whoever is making the decision.

The third step involves identifying the possible sources of a financial conflict of interest. Having an updated Form 700 can help you easily identify your possible conflict of interest sources.

There are six kinds of economic interests that could result in a conflict of interest. The first is a business investment: If you have an interest in a business entity in which you, your spouse, your dependant children, or anyone acting on your behalf has \$2,000 or more invested this could result in a conflict of interest.

The second is type is business employment or management. You would have an economic interest if you are a director, officer, partner, trustee, or employee of a business.

The third type is the real property you, your spouse, or your dependant children have \$2,000 or more invested in. The fourth kind of economic interest is anyone (individual or organization) who has given you \$500 or more in the 12 months preceding the decision. It's important to note that if your spouse is employed, your spouses employer would also be considered an economic interest. Furthermore, if your spouse or your dependant children own 10% or more of a business you are considered to be receiving pass through income from the clients of that business.

The fifth type of economic interest is anyone who has given you gifts that equal more than \$340 in the 12 months preceding the decision. The final type of economic interest is personal financial effect: You have an economic interest in your personal expenses, income, assets, or liabilities, as well as those of your immediate family. If these interests are likely to go up or down by \$250 or more in a 12 month period because of a decision the RCD makes, then the decision has a personal financial effect on you.

After you have determined the potential sources of economic impact you are ready to move on to step four. We will cover the remaining steps in the next edition. In the mean time, contact the Fair Political Practices Commission at 1-866-ASK-FPPC or <http://www.fppc.ca.gov> for more information.

Personnel Management: Position Descriptions

Position descriptions are an important part of managing RCD employees. There are many potential beneficial uses for written position descriptions. First of all, a position description can help the RCD identify the skill set the RCD should look for when filling a particular position. This will make it easier for the RCD to find the right person for the job. Secondly, position descriptions help communicate the requirements of the position to prospective and current employees. Finally, the RCD can use the position description to set performance standards. The performance standards can then be used when evaluating employees for raises and promotions.

When writing a position description it is best to describe only the major duties of the position. Don't spend too much time describing the minor day-to-day tasks. Furthermore, you should also make an effort to avoid describing the person who is already occupying the position. Focus on the job rather than the individual. Sit down with your personnel committee to identify the most important duties of the position and include those in the description.

A well written position description can be the base for setting performance standards for an employee. If everyone has a clear picture of what is expected out of the employee, it will be easier to determine how well the employee is performing. Furthermore, position descriptions can help to improve communication between employees and their supervisors. Once position descriptions are developed they should be updated on a regular basis.

Some sample position descriptions can be found on the CARCD website at: <http://www.carcd.org/download/download.htm> It's important to have a position description for all of your positions. They can help the RCD get the most out of their employees.

Watershed Coordinator Workshops

Watershed stewardship will be the first workshop offered in this series. The first workshop will be held at the McConnell Foundation in Redding on November 30 and December 1, 2004. The workshop will also be held a week later at the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board branch office in Fresno on December 7 and 8, 2004. Dates and locations for the wildlife corridors and group facilitation workshops have not yet been determined, but are planned for late winter and early spring next year.

This training is specifically for coordinators working under the Department's grant program and we strongly encourage them to attend. The training is free, and for the watershed stewardship workshops, some financial assistance may be available to cover hotel expenses for coordinators traveling from distances. There will be space for up to 30 people at each session. DOC funded coordinators will receive first priority; however, consideration may be given to conservation specialists outside of the grant program based on seating availability.

An announcement and registration form have been sent directly to all DOC grantees. Questions about the workshop series or requests for the registration form should be directed to Andrew Rush with the DOC at (916) 323-4163.

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Save Money, Save Energy, Save Natural
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The RCD Outlook newsletter is intended to provide RCDs with helpful tips and updates on RCD work statewide. If you would like to be added to the mailing list or have an article to contribute please feel free to call the RCD program staff at 916-324-0774 or send an email to rcd@conservation.ca.gov.